

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-07

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 PM-03 SP-02 L-01 INR-05 (ISO) W

-----022026 118485 /41

R 021530Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4282

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 0451

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GY, CU

SUBJECT: CUBA/GUYANESE RELATIONS

REF: GEORGETOWN 0388

SUMMARY: CUBAN VICE-PRESIDENT JUAN ALMEIDA BOSQUE'S VISIT REPORTEDLY HAD CUBAN DOMESTIC POLITICAL MOTIVES AS WELL AS INTENT OF STRENGTHENING RELATIONS WITH GUYANA. ACCORDING TO FONMIN WILLS, THE CUBANS ARE COOPERATING WITH GOG VIS-A-VIS CHEDDI JAGAN AND HE SEES THEM ACTING SOMEWHAT INDEPENDENTLY OF THE SOVIETS IN THE CARIBBEAN. WILLS HAS CONFIRMED TO ME "ON PERSONAL BASIS" THAT GUYANA HAS RECEIVED CUBAN ARMS FOR USE BY PEOPLES MILITIA. CASTRO REPORTEDLY WILL VISIT TO THE UNGA IN SEPTEMBER. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT SATISFIED THAT WE YET KNOW ALL THE OBJECTIVES OF CUBAN VICE-PRESIDENT JUAN ALMEIDA BOSQUE'S VISIT TO GUYANA LAST WEEK, WE ARE REPORTING HERewith ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THAT PLUS OTHER INFORMATION ON OTHER CUBAN ACTIVITIES AND THE CUBAN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

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2. WILLS CLAIMS THAT CONTRARY TO PRESS REPORTS (REFTEL), THE GOG DID NOT INVITE ALMEIDA TO GUYANA FOR THE REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATIONS. CASTRO HAD BEEN URGING THE GOG FOR SOME TIME TO ACCEPT A VISIT FROM ALMEIDA, A BLACK CUBAN, AND DURING WILLS' VISIT TO CUBA IN JANUARY THIS YEAR, GOG HAD AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO A VISIT, BUT NO DATE WAS SET. SUBSEQUENTLY THE CUBANS ANNOUNCED THAT ALMEIDA WOULD ATTEND

THE REPUBLIC DAY EVENTS.

3. THE CUBANS WERE COOPERATING VIS-A-VIS CHEDDI JAGAN. ACCORDING TO WILLS, ALMEIDA DURING MEETINGS WITH GOG OFFICIALS HAD SAID THAT THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC), BEING THE GOVERNMENT PARTY, WOULD OBVIOUSLY SET THE TERMS FOR ACHIEVING NATIONAL UNITY. WILLS COMPLAINED THAT THE SOVIETS STILL WERE PRESSING THE GOG TO INCLUDE JAGAN IN A "NATIONAL UNITY" GOVERNMENT, AND THEN RATHER EMPHATICALLY STATED: "THERE WILL BE NO UNITED FRONT BEFORE THE ELECTIONS. THERE WILL BE NO POWER SHARING WITH JAGAN."

4. APART FROM BEING AN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO CULTIVATE GUYANA, WILLS TOLD ME THAT ALMEIDA'S VISIT WAS PART OF CASTRO'S TACTICS IN HANDLING HIS "BLACK PROBLEM." WILLS SAID HE CONSIDERED SUCH BLATENT ATTEMPTS TO USE SKIN COLOR AND "AFRICAN BLOOD" AS A MEANS OF INFLUENCING A GOVERNMENT TO BE INEFFECTIVE WITH GUYANESE OFFICIALS. THE EXCEPTION WAS ACTING PRIME MINISTER PTOLEMY REID. WITH REID, THE ONLY JUSTIFICATION ALMEIDA USED FOR CUBA'S PRESENCE IN ANGOLA HAD BEEN THAT THEY WENT TO HELP THEIR BLACK BROTHERS. ACCORDING TO WILLS, REID HAD SWALLOWED THE BAIT.

5. ALMEIDA TOLD WILLS HE WOULD VISIT THE UN IN MAY THIS YEAR, AND THAT CASTRO PLANS TO ADDRESS THE UNGA IN SEPTEMBER. WILLS SPECULATED THAT PERHAPS CASTRO WAS EXPECTING THAT US-CUBAN COMMUNICATION WOULD HAVE EVOLVED BY THEN TO THE POINT WHERE HE COULD VISIT WASHINGTON.

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6. CONCERNING CUBA-SOVIET RELATIONS, WILLS SAID HE SENSED GROWING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE SOVIETS RECENTLY BEGAN SEEKING FISHING RIGHTS IN GUYANESE WATERS. THE CUBANS, WHOSE ONE-YEAR AGREEMENT TERMINATES AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER, UPON LEARNING OF THE SOVIET EFFORTS, HAD COUNSELED WILLS AGAINST ACCEPTING THE SOVIET PROPOSAL (WHICH INCLUDED TRAINING FOR GUYANESE FISHERMEN, SCHOLARSHIPS AND OTHER ENTICEMENTS). COMMENT: THIS APPEARS TO CONFLICT WITH EARLIER REPORT THAT CUBANS HAD SUGGESTED TO GUYANESE THAT GUYANESE OFFER SOVIETS A NAVAL REFUELING FACILITY. END COMMENT. WILLS ALSO SAID THAT ALMEIDA HAD TOLD HIM THE CUBANS WERE ARGUING WITH THE SOVIETS OVER DIAMONDS IN ANGOLA.

7. DURING A SESSION WHEN WILLS AGAIN EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT PRIME MINISTER ARRON'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT ARRON MIGHT SEEK ARMS, I SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS ARRON WAS WORRIED OVER REPORTS OF CUBAN ARMS BEING BROUGHT INTO GUYANA. I POINTED OUT THAT I HEARD RUMORS OF

ARMS IMPORTS AND THE LATEST ISSUE OF THE WORKING PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER HAD MENTIONED CUBAN ARMS SHIPMENTS. WILLS RESPONDED THAT HE COULD CONFIRM "ON A PERSONAL BASIS" (I ASSUME THIS MEANS HE WOULD DENY THE REPORTS IF ASKED OFFICIALLY) THAT GUYANA HAD RECEIVED SMALL ARMS FROM CUBA AT ALMOST NO COST. THE ARMS WERE BEING USED FOR EQUIPING THE PEOPLES MILITIA.

8. COMMENT: WILLS APPEARS AT TIMES CONCERNED OVER THE GOG RELATIONSHIP WITH CUBA, BUT THIS MAY BE AIMED AT SOOTHING THE US. HE CLAIMS TO BE FULLY AWARE OF THE DANGERS FOR GUYANA THAT THE CUBANS POSE, BUT THE GOG'S OUTWARD BEHAVIOR TOWARD THE CUBANS INDICATES A COMPLACENCY OVER THE THREAT. THE GUYANESE TEND, IN MY VIEW, TO UNDER-ESTIMATE THE SOPHISTICATION OF THE CUBANS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE "INDEPENDENCE" THAT WILLS SEES THE CUBANS DISPLAYING FROM THE SOVIETS MAY BE SIMPLY A GAMBIT THAT THE CUBANS

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ARE EMPLOYING--WITH SOVIET CONCURRENCE--TO DIMINISH GUYANESE SUSPICIONS OF THEM AND FURTHER STRENGTHEN THEIR IDENTIFICATION AS A CARIBBEAN BROTHER RATHER THAN A SOVIET CLIENT. WILLS' ADMISSION THAT THE CUBANS HAVE SENT ARMS TO GUYANA CONFIRMED WHAT WE HAVE SUSPECTED FOR SOME TIME AND EXPLAINS WHY THE PEOPLES MILITIA TRAINING UNITS NOW USE RIFLES RATHER THAN STICKS FOR THEIR DRILLING. END COMMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, VISITS, MEETING REPORTS
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Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
From: GEORGETOWN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197703102/aaaadlztel
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Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 444c88ac-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS, STADIS
Reference: 77 GEORGETOWN 388
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2942876
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CUBA/GUYANESE RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, GY, CU, (ROSQUE, JUAN ALMEIDA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/444c88ac-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009